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# MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of interest to USDA management

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USDA EMPLOYEES HONORED.....Four USDA employees participating in the Department's Upward Mobility Program were recently inducted into Alpha Sigma Lambda, the National Evening Student Honor Society. These employees, all students at University College (the University of Maryland's Adult Continuing Education Program), are Ms. Jane A. Easley, APHIS; Ms. Ellen Franezak, APHIS; Ms. Linda J. Hinkle, AMS; and Ms. Leoma J. Kruzic, ARS.

To be eligible for membership in the honor society it is necessary to maintain a minimum average of 3.5 out of a possible 4.0 for at least 30 semester hours. These employees were sent letters of congratulations by the Assistant Secretary for Administration. (Contact: Betty Waters, OP, ext. 73635)

GAO REVIEW OF PRIVACY ACT IMPLEMENTATION.....The General Accounting Office is reviewing Privacy Act implementation in the USDA and other Departments and Executive Branch agencies. The review of the Office of Investigation was recently completed and GAO recommended three minor changes in the OI published system of records. The GAO draft report will not be available until the Spring of 1977. GAO will decide this week if it will conduct any additional reviews within USDA. (Contact: L. L. Free, OI, ext. 76915)

## FY 78 BUDGET.....

- ...Appeals - The Department's appeal of allowances is in the process of review by OMB and, where applicable, by the President. Department and agency officials should be advised of decisions on these appeals by December 20. Decisions on end-of-year employment ceilings for FY 77 and FY 78 will be made after the budget decisions have been reached - hopefully before year end.
  - ...Hearings - House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee hearings on the FY 78 budget are tentatively scheduled as follows:
    - General budget overview, February 15, 1:00 p.m.
    - Farm Credit Administration, February 15, 3:00 p.m.
    - Secretary of Agriculture, February 16-17, 1:00 p.m.
    - General Agricultural Outlook, February 18, 10:00 a.m.
- (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

ANNUAL RECORDS HOLDING REPORT.....USDA agencies reported 982,155 cubic feet of records as of September 30, 1976. This constitutes 12 cubic feet of records for each permanent full-time USDA employee. This is equal to 8 letter-size file cabinet drawers or two entire four drawer file cabinets.

The September 30 inventory decreased 7,069 cubic feet from the June 30, 1975, inventory and agencies are to be commended. However, 12 cubic feet of records per employee is still too high and agencies should strive to make further reductions. (Contact: Peter J. Doyle, OMF, ext. 75725)

CSC ORIENTATION MATERIALS.....The Civil Service Commission has recently developed a series of videotape/film programs for orienting new employees to the Federal Service. Agency and Commission reception of the programs has been very favorable. The quality of both the tapes and films is excellent and the content is appropriate for use in agency orientation of new employees. The following items are available:

|  | <u>Tape</u> | <u>Film</u> |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Working for the United States<br>(25 minutes)    | \$ 35.00    | \$110.00    |
| You and the Merit System<br>(15 1/2 minutes)     | \$ 27.00    | \$ 80.00    |
| The Road Ahead<br>(17 minutes)                   | \$ 27.00    | \$ 80.00    |
| Your Rights and Responsibilities<br>(17 minutes) | \$ 27.00    | \$ 80.00    |
| Benefits You Earn<br>(16 1/2 minutes)            | \$ 27.00    | \$ 80.00    |
| Complete Set                                     | \$143.00    | \$430.00    |

Details on how to submit requisitions are found in Civil Service Commission BULLETIN NO. 410-89, dated October 26, 1976. (Contact: Linda Holscher, OP, ext. 76977)

SAVINGS BOND PROGRAM.....USDA, in cooperation with the Treasury Department, will utilize a new approach in the Savings Bond Program beginning in January 1977. The changes are:

- ...Entering personnel will receive information on the bond program from the personnel clerk handling the appointment within their agency.
- ...Promotional articles will be placed in employee publications.
- ...Bond program coordinators, at all organizational levels, will be provided with data on new hires, new allotments, number of dropped allotments and increased allotments, total employment and allotments.

The results of these changes will be evaluated after May 31, 1977. Further changes may then be made. (Contact: James Entwistle, OP, ext. 78625)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PERSONNEL PROGRAMS.....USDA continues to be one of the leading Federal participants in the Intergovernmental Personnel Programs. These programs are designed to permit the exchange of personnel between Federal Executive Agencies and State and local governments and universities for work of mutual concern and benefit.

During FY 76, USDA agencies entered into 143 intergovernmental personnel agreements (IPA), with SCS involved in 95 of these. The Department was second only to HEW which entered into 344 IPAs. Assignments have been made in the following program areas: research, land management, forestry, soil science, soil conservation, agricultural statistics, agricultural economics, special food programs, budget and finance, and consumer programs. (Contact: Patricia Killen, OP, ext. 72435)

# NEWS FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.....

...White-collar Women.....The number of women in full-time white-collar jobs in the Federal Government increased by 14,114 in the year ending October 31, 1975. Women accounted for 76 percent of an overall net increase of 18,493 in Federal white-collar jobs in this one year period.

The 1975 survey data indicates continued upward movement for women within the Federal work force, with more women employed in higher grade groupings and fewer women in the lower grades.

Women constituted 42.1 percent of Federal employees in the GS pay plan or equivalent systems as of October 31, 1975. (Source: Civil Service Journal, July/September 1976)

...Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA).....The Civil Service Commission has announced the allocation of \$12.4 million in IPA formula grants for FY 77. State and local governments can use these funds to strengthen managerial capabilities and to train professional, administrative, and technical personnel.

...Minority Employment.....More minority group employees moved into higher graded and better paying Federal civilian jobs in the year ending November 30, 1975. At the same time, total full-time employment decreased by 11,794 jobs while total full-time minority employment decreased by 2,860 jobs. Minorities registered net increases in the middle and upper grade groupings of the GS pay plan.

FY 76 PERFORMANCE RATINGS.....Less than 1% of USDA employees received outstanding performance ratings compared with 3.5% government-wide. In USDA, however, 85% of those who received an outstanding rating were given monetary recognition compared to 52% government-wide. Of those in USDA, 28% received cash awards and 51% quality increases. An additional 4% were either promoted or received an honorary award. (Contact: Mae Paulsen, OP, ext. 75618)

ADP POLICY ADVISORY BOARD.....On November 16, the Assistant Secretary for Administration sent a memo to Agency Administrators suggesting an organizational concept for an ADP Policy Advisory Board. Responses to this memo have been received and are being reviewed. With a few exceptions, the Agency Administrators supported the proposal as stated. (Contact: H. W. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275)

SPACE CONSULTANT CONTRACT.....The Federal Design Matters Newsletter, published by the National Endowment for the Arts, will feature an article on the USDA space consultant contract in an upcoming issue. The purpose of this article is to show how Federal agencies are using design services to promote better space utilization. The Assistant Secretary for Administration was interviewed by the Federal Design Matters Newsletter staff and his comments are expected to be included in the article. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, 00, ext. 73141)

"LOYALTY" QUESTIONS DROPPED FROM EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS.....The Civil Service Commission will no longer require applicants to answer questions pertaining to organizational membership when they fill out applications for employment. The Commission will still have the responsibility to inquire into and resolve any question of loyalty during the investigative process.

#### NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER NEWS.....

...Operational Improvements and recent activities at NFC include:

New automated tax exemption certificate (SF-1094). With each payment made to oil companies, it has been necessary to manually prepare a tax exemption certificate for filing with each state government as appropriate. In cooperation with GSA and Treasury, an automated SF-1094 has been developed. This will significantly reduce manual effort and facilitate these payments. This is the first such automated procedure in the Federal Government.

Automated oil company billings - Since the centralization of payments, the NFC has been working with oil companies to obtain automated billings. These automated billings, in the form of magnetic tapes or punch cards, will eliminate the need to process thousands of individual invoices. Some companies now submit monthly billings covering more than 3,000 individual sales invoices. This new procedure will enable the NFC to save 2 to 3 staff years annually and will result in faster payments to the companies.

...Visitors - The Controller of the State of Massachusetts, members of his staff and consultants visited the NFC to overview the total system as a part of their effort to begin a similar system project. Massachusetts is estimating a \$20 million plus contract to develop its system.

...AD-838 System - The NFC is notifying all offices of the more common problems relating to preparation of purchase orders (AD-838) in hopes that this information will enable the offices to properly complete these forms. As with all new systems, the initial rejections caused by errors on the forms increase processing time and escalate the staffing required to research and reenter the transactions.

...Pay Period 25 Documents - All payroll contact points and personnel offices have been requested to make timely submission of payroll documents and T & A's for pay period 25. This will insure that earnings for all employees can be reported during 1976.

PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES (PMI).....The November 29 issue of this newsletter contained an article on OMB Circular No. A-113. Since then, the Director of Management and Finance has met with OMB officials to discuss USDA's responsibilities under this circular.

The Department will use, with some adjustments and additions, the action plan prepared under the PMI program as the initial management plan. All action will be coordinated through OMF and agencies should not take any action or submit reports required by A-113 unless requested to do so by OMF. OMF will be providing additional details to agencies shortly.

Agencies engaged in projects related to PMI should continue their activity. The new management plan will not discontinue current efforts. (Contact: Jim Olmes, OMF, ext. 73226)

THEFT OF GOVERNMENT AND PERSONAL PROPERTY.....The holiday season always means an increase in the number of thefts, and several have been reported in the past few weeks. Electronic calculators and purses are always prime targets, and when left unattended, should be placed out of sight. Improved security is the responsibility of all USDA personnel.

NO NEWSLETTER TO BE PUBLISHED DEC. 27.....Publication of the Newsletter will resume with the January 10, 1977 issue. We wish to extend our best wishes for a happy holiday season. Please don't hesitate to submit articles for the Newsletter at any time.